

The Burrows Mansion  
Matawan, Monmouth County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-198

HABS  
NJ  
13-MAT  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS  
N.J.

13-MAT.

1-

The Burrows Mansion  
Matawan, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Owner: Miss J. Mabel Brown

Date of Erection: 1723

Architect:

Builder: John Bowne

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Foundation - Native fieldstone

Exterior walls - scalloped  
shingles front, rear and  
south elevations; clapboards  
on the gables; clapboards  
north elevation; brick and  
clay filled between studs;  
porch along front and south  
elevation.

Interior walls - plaster

Roof - main house gambrel, wood  
shingles; tin on porch roof;  
one story rear wing covered  
with seam tin over shingles

Inside chimneys, main house;  
exterior chimney on later  
addition

Floors - wood

### Historical Data:

This house is known as the Burrows or Burrowes House. The original structure was erected by John Bowne in 1723. It was personally supervised by him and a sense of rivalry entered into the building of the house because John Bowne was trying to excel the house built by his father at Crawford's Corner. The house was a two story frame dwelling 38 feet 6 inches by 30 feet 6 inches; a lean-to kitchen at the rear, and a porch across the front completed the building. The arch in the hall and the staircase were considered fine pieces of work for those days.

Sometime before 1900, a two story addition was built on the east end of the main house and the kitchen lean-to enlarged. Early in 1900 the house was extensively remodeled extending around the west end; a part of the rear lean-to was taken off.

John Burrowes purchased the house before the Revolutionary War. He developed quite a profitable business buying and marketing grain and produce. A number of warehouses, granaries, and so forth were located on the bluff overlooking the creek back of the Mansion. Slaves loaded the produce on board the vessels for New York City, under the supervision of Corn King Burrowes. A son of the Corn King, John Burrowes, Jr., and Jonathan Forman, his brother-in-law, were organizers of the First New Jersey Company to leave Monmouth County for the war of the Revolution. They were called the "six months soldiers". The old manuscript states that "'Tho Company formed in the yard of John Burrowes, Sr.' (which is the present front yard of the house) 'uniformed, armed and equipped for active service. Andrew Brown, a respectable sea captain, marshalled the large meeting of men, women and children to take leave of fathers, brothers and friends. Everything was conducted with patriotic firmness and subdued grief. The soldiers were all

formed, each officer in his place and the captain gave orders 'Forward march'. When the drum and fife struck up the tune of 'Duncan Darie' it was a moment of indescribable grief. They marched to Brownspoint, embarked on shipboard to Gravesend, Long Island, and joined General Washington and the American Army there'. This was written by an old man of ninety who had been an eye witness to the scene." (The Matawan Journal)

The bountiful granaries of John Burrowes were objects of many raids by the Tories. Major John Burrowes, Jr. had made himself obnoxious to the Tories because of his opposition to British rule. The major had left his wife at the home of his father, and was in the habit of secretly visiting her. Some Tory families in the neighborhood learning this, plotted to capture him during one of these visits. Major Burrowes successfully eluded them. However, on one occasion, the Tories succeeded in getting word to the "Greens", an organization of refugees on Staten Island. They crossed to the New Jersey shore and reached the Burrowes Mansion after midnight. The family had been awakened; Major Burrowes escaped and swam the creek and hid himself for two days and nights in the dense woods.

His wife, Margaret Burrowes, who had aided in her husband's escape, heard one of the officers coming upstairs, and she came from her room and faced him on the second landing where she met her death. The officer, in reply to a query of hers, asked her for the shawl that she had about her shoulders to use as bandage for one of his men. She answered, "You'll not get my shawl or anything else here to aid a British subject". The officer

took the shawl and in the scuffle struck her on the breast with the hilt of his sword. She recovered, but it is claimed that her death was due to the effects of the attack.

The house was pillaged and the granaries burned, but the Mansion was saved.

It is interesting to note that Major Burrowes, who was honorably discharged at the end of the war, met his death by drowning in the St. Johns River, Florida. The father, John Burrowes, Sr., was elected Sheriff of Monmouth County, which office he held until his death in 1785.

Today the house is operated as the "Colonial Tea House Room".

Bibliography:

Mills, W.J. Historic Houses in New Jersey Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1902

A Newspaper Article in The Matawan Journal based on letters from great-great-grandchildren of John Bowne and from the manuscripts of Jonathan Forman written by himself.

Information from Miss J. Mabel Brown, Publisher of the Matawan Journal and the Keyport Weekly, Matawan and Keyport, New Jersey, given to George A. Delatush.

Walter E. Ruth  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour A. Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.  
District Officer

Rev. Dec. 1, '36 THW

N. J.  
12. MAT.  
1-A D D E N D U M

Inasmuch as the date of erection and name of first owner of this house have been variously asserted, the following references are cited accordingly, so that our deduction on these two points, derived as it is from our survey of the building, and search of title, may be more evident.

(1) W. J. Mills, Historic Houses of New Jersey (1902) pages 175-182 (with cut) says "The Burrowes Mansion.....is very much like the former Mt. Pleasant Hall. They were both erected in the first half of the eighteenth century, and tradition says by the same architect, a native of Elizabethtown, whose name is lost to posterity. John Burrowes.....became the owner a few years after its completion". On pages 164-174, he says that Mt. Pleasant Hall was the home of Philip Freneau, erected in 1752 by Pierre Freneau his father, composed of a large main house with two frame wings added later, and was partly destroyed by fire in 1818. How then could Mills observe that the two houses were alike?

(2) Franklin Ellis, History of Monmouth County, New Jersey, (1885) page 830, quotes in an account of the Tory raid on this house of John Burrowes, an address of the Hon. William Spader on 4 July 1876, "The house now occupied by Dr. Pitman and built before the Revolution by a Mr. Burrowes, has a history of itself".

(3) Federal Writers Projects, a history of Matawan 1686-1936, on pages 88-89 says inter al. that "The Burrowes Mansion at 94 Main Street..... before the Revolution, the house was bought by John Burrowes, Sr. The mansion erected in 1723 by John Bowne, is said to be of his own design and construction".

(4) John E. Stillwell, M.D., in a pedigree of Bowne of Monmouth County published in his Historical and Genealogical Miscellany, Vol. 3 (1914), page 55,

states that John Bowne of Matawan on 13 January 1723 and 14 December 1726 resided "in the house which became celebrated in the Revolution as the Burrowes house and which is now occupied by Dr. Pitman of Matawan. It is my belief that the old Pitman house at Matawan was built by John Bowne about 1723-6. It was the duplicate of the one recently destroyed at Crawford's Corners". Dr. Stillwell also states that this John Bowne of Middletown, was born there 1700 and died 1774 in the homestead at Crawford's Corners, having acquired it by a quitclaim deed of 20 August 1747 from his three brothers conveying the said house and land formerly the dwelling place of their father Obadiah Bowne (died 1726) "which now is and has been for years the dwelling place of the said John Bowne", a tract of 632 acres..... "The house at Crawford's Corners was built in 1701, doubtless by Obadiah Bowne, to which sometime after his decease, his son John removed. This house and its contents were recently destroyed by fire", further says this compiler. Accordingly, it is impossible to verify his statement quoted above, that the house at Matawan was a duplicate of the Bowne homestead at Crawford's Corners.

Of John Burrowes Sr., to whom we have traced ownership of the house at Matawan in January 1778, and at the time of his death in 1785, as reported hereafter, the pedigree of Burrowes in the reference above, on page 140, says he was born in 1718 in Middletown, Monmouth County, died in September 1785, and was buried in the Presbyterian Churchyard there; and that "This residence now commonly known as the Dr. Pitman House in Matawan, a magnificent specimen of Colonial architecture, which was built probably by the Bownes". Inserted in this pedigree of Burrowes, Dr. Stillwell quotes two letters written about 1894, one of which states that the account of the Revolutionary episode at this house, as given in Ellis' History (see above) "agrees very well with tradition as it has been handed down in our branch of the family", also that Dr. Stillwell's announcement that the house was built by John Bowne in or about 1723 contradicted their tradition that John Burrowes had built it. Dr. Stillwell adds "From data in my possession, I deduced that the Burrowes House

was built in or about 1723, by Obadiah or John Bowne", but fails to reveal the evidence. Accordingly he is responsible for the assignment of date and name which we have accepted in the lack of evidence per contra. There appears no deed on record conveying this property in Matawan to John Burrowes, Sr., and so the source of his title has not been determined. He might have acquired it through his marriage to the widow Watson in 1749.

John Burrowes, Sr., to whom however the ownership of this house has been traced in the records, was born in 1718, died in September 1785, and is buried in the Presbyterian Churchyard in Middletown, son of Eden Burrowes (1687-1731) of same place. By his wife Hope (Taylor) Watson, widow of Capt. John Watson, whom he married by license dated 2 December 1749, and who died 27 October 1792 John Burrowes, Sr., had issue, among others who died young, daughters Rachel (1751-1840) 2nd wife of (Col.) Dr. Thomas Henderson of Freehold; Hope wife of Jonathan Forman of Cazenovia, N.Y.; and an only son John Burrowes Jr. In his will of 1 Sept. 1785, proved 15 Oct. following, this John Burrowes (Sr.) of Middletown Twp. devised to his wife Hope the use of his estate during her lifetime, cancels debts due from his son John, and devises the residue to the son and to the daughters Rachel Henderson and Hope Foreman equally, the son John to have the preference in the real estate on Middletown Point (Matawan).

In verification of later stories of the capture of John Burrowes (Sr.), the following account published contemporary with the affair is quoted from the New Jersey Gazette of 3 June 1778: We are informed that on Wednesday morning last, a part of about seventy of the Greens from Sandy Hook landed near Major Kearney's, headed the mill creek, Middletown Point, and marched to Mr. Burrowe's, made him prisoner, burnt his mills and both his storehouses, all valuable buildings, besides a great deal of furniture-----Also took Lieut. Col. John Smock, Capt. Christopher Little, Mr. Joseph Wall, Capt. Jacob Covenhoven, and several other persons; killed



Pearce and Van Brockle, and wounded another man mortally.....(Abstracts of Newspapers, publ. in N. J. Archives, 2nd series, Vol. 2, page 237).

John Burrowes, Jr., (Captain, later Major), the son and heir abovenamed, thus in 1785 succeeded his father in possession of the house here considered. His death between 1788 and 1797 is variously stated as having occurred in St. John's River, Florida, St. Mary's River in the same state, and perhaps in New Orleans, after his discharge from the Army at the end of the Revolution(a). By his wife, Margaret Forman(b), who died 14 July 1787, aged 28-11-16 (gravestone in Mt. Pleasant Cem., Matawan) he had issue; Catherine wife of Jacob W. Hallett of Pultneyville, N.Y., Helen wife of Samuel S. Breese of Cazenovia, N.Y., and a son John for whom as an orphan on 31 July 1797 Col. Asher Holmes was appointed guardian, and who was later lost at sea.(a)

After the death of his wife as above stated, Major John Burrowes(Jr.), by an unrecorded deed of 29 March 1788, conveyed to (her uncle) General David Forman, the 15 acre part of the real estate in Middletown Point which he had received in 1785 by the will of his father, being the historic house here surveyed. This grantee was born 1 Oct. 1733, and died 30 March 1812, having married 1st: Ann Denise and 2nd Elinor Van Brunt, widow,(b) and supposedly lived in the house for a time.

By deed of 28 April 1795, this Gen. David Forman and wife Anne, being then of Freehold Twp., conveyed to John I. Holmes for 5000 pounds the same 15 acres in Middletown Point, with "all manner of houses, buildings, edifices, structures", etc., reciting the deed abovesaid. The property was seized from the estate of Holmes by the sheriff, pursuant to legal proceedings, and sold to Chrineyance Van Mater of Middletown Twp. for 2013 Pounds by deed of 17 March 1800, in which it is described as "all that tract or lot of land which was granted and sold by deed from John Burrowes to David Forman, dated 29 March 1788, and by deed of 28 April 1795 by Gen'l. David Forman to John I. Holmes in his lifetime,

(a) Stillwell, cited supra

(b) Anne S. Dandridge, The Forman Genealogy, publ. 1903, pp.76-77

being at Middletown Point, beginning at the highway that leads to the landing at the corner of land formerly owned by John I. Holmes, thence running along said Holmes' line to Matawan Creek, thence down said creek the several courses thereof to the landing road, including the storehouse and docks and the shop with the small lot which was purchased to erect the same on, thence following the landing road to the beginning, containing 15 acres more or less.

From Chrineyance Van Mater the property passed to William Parker of Shrewsbury Twp., who died intestate before 3 May 1825, on which dated his administrators passed title to Joseph H. and Holmes Van Mater, the latter of whom evidently was then living in this house.

By deed of 13 Jan. 1842 these grantees, Holmes and Joseph H. Van Mater and respective wife, of Middletown Point, in a division of a 21.75 acre tract in Middletown Point, conveyed half to Aaron Longstreet, and a quarter each to Garret Hiers and Haddock Whitlock, all of Middletown Twp.

By deed of 1 April 1846, Hiers abovenamed with his wife, being still of Middletown Twp. (in which is located this house on Middletown Pt.) conveyed his share of the tract to Jacob W. Fountain of same place, for \$4000, and by one of 17 April 1848, Fountain and Whitlock conveyed to Longstreet half of the whole, whereby the last named came into possession of the part on which stands the house here considered. Longstreet and wife conveyed to Aaron Pitman, the house and its lot having a frontage of 68½ feet on the west side of Main Street in the Village of Middletown Point by deed of 1 April 1854. This Aaron Pitman (D.D.S.) held and occupied the same until 8 March 1870, on which date he passed title by deed to Alfred W. Arrowsmith of Freehold, who on the same date passed it to Anna M. Pitman, wife of Aaron, abovesaid.

Part of the premises (1.31 acres and the house) was taken from her and sold by the Sheriff to the Mutual Insurance Company of New York, by deed of 27 Oct. 1897, as result of case in the Court of Chancery, and on 28 Dec. 1903 that grantee passed it to Benjamin F. S. Brown of Matawan. Jennie Mabel Brown and others, heirs of said Brown, conveyed the same to Jennie S. Brown, widow, of Matawan, by deed recorded 14 July 1930. Similarly, by deed of 1 June 1938, said Jennie Mabel Brown and others, conveyed the same property to Mildred Brown Herrick of the Village of Matawan.

Corrections to our previous account must include the spelling of the surname as Burrowes, the name of builder to read: John Bowne (1700-1774) or John Burrowes, Sr. (1718-1785), the east end unit of the house added prior to 1855, the roof being gambrel (not hip), the present front porch an addition in 1900, and the address 94 Main Street.

#### Bibliography:

George C. Beekman, Early Dutch Settlers of Monmouth County, N. J., (1901) with two photographs opposite page 1 of the appendix.

Franklin Ellis, History of Monmouth County, N. J. (1825) page 230, cited supra.

John E. Stillwell, M. D., Historical and Genealogical Miscellany, Vo. 3, cited supra.

W.J.Mills, Historic Houses of New Jersey (1902) with illustration, pp. 175-182, cited supra.

Federal Writers Projects, Matawan, 1686-1936, pp. 88-89, with illustration, cited supra.

*Leur's D. Cook*

Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

JW 11/14

Addendum to

HABS No. NJ-198

Burrowes Mansion  
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail  
94 Main Street  
Matawan  
Monmouth County  
New Jersey

HABS  
NJ  
13-MAT.  
1-

PHOTOCRAPHS

~~WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA~~

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127